UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS
(UNFICYP)

Location
Cyprus

Headquarters
Nicosia

Duration
March 1964 - to date

Maximum strength
6,411 (June 1964)

Current strength
2,142 and 38 civilian police (30 June 1991)

Fatalities
155 (30 June 1991)

Commander
Major-General Clive Milner (Canada)

Historical Background

Cyprus became independent on 16 August 1960 with a Constitution that was intended to balance the interests of the island's Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. A treaty of August 1960, entered into by Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom guaranteed the basic provisions of the Constitution and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Cyprus.

The application of the provisions of the Constitution, however, encountered difficulties from the very beginning and led to a succession of constitutional crises. The accumulated tension between the two communities resulted in the outbreak of violence on the island on 21 December 1963.

On 27 December, the United Nations Security Council met to consider a complaint by Cyprus charging intervention in its internal affairs and aggression by Turkey. Turkey maintained that Greek Cypriot leaders had tried for more than two years to nullify the rights of the Turkish Cypriot community and denied all charges of aggression.

UNITED NATIONS

Establishment of UNFICYP

On 15 February 1964, after all attempts to restore peace on the island had failed, the representatives of the United Kingdom and of Cyprus requested urgent action by the Security Council. On 4 March 1964, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 186 (1964), by which it recommended the establishment of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus with a mandate to prevent the recurrence of fighting, help maintain law and order, and promote a return to normal conditions. Since then, the Council has periodically extended UNFICYP's mandate, usually for periods of six months at a time.

Maintenance of the Cease-Fire and the Status Quo

In connection with the hostilities in July and August 1974, the Security Council adopted a number of resolutions which have affected the functioning of UNFICYP and have required the Force to perform certain additional functions relating, in particular, to the maintenance of the cease-fire.

Following a de facto cease-fire, which came into effect on 16 August 1974, UNFICYP inspected the deployment of the Cyprus National Guard and the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces, and cease-fire lines and a buffer zone were established between the areas controlled by the opposing parties. The cease-fire lines extend approximately 180 kilometres across the island. The buffer zone between the lines varies in width from less than 20 metres to some 7 kilometres, and it covers about 3 per cent of the island, including some of the most valuable agricultural land.

Strict adherence to the military status quo in the buffer zone, as recorded by UNFICYP at the time, has become a vital element in preventing a recurrence of

fighting. UNFICYP maintains constant surveillance through a system of 148 observation posts, 52 of which are permanently manned, and through air, vehicle and foot patrols. The Force maintains a patrol track, which runs the length of the buffer zone and is used for surveillance, monitoring of agricultural activities, the resupply of observation posts and rapid reaction to any incidents.

The task of UNFICYP is significantly complicated by the absence of a formal cease-fire agreement. As a result, UNFICYP is confronted with hundreds of incidents each year. The most serious incidents tend to occur in areas where the cease-fire lines are in close proximity to each other, particularly in Nicosia and its suburbs. The Force investigates and acts upon all violations of the cease-fire and the status quo. Its reaction in each particular case depends on the nature of the incident and may include the deployment of troops, verbal and written protests and follow-up action to ensure that the violation has been rectified or will not recur.

The operational elements of UNFICYP comprise military personnel from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as civilian police from Australia and Sweden.

Humanitarian Activities

Another major function entrusted to UNFICYP is to encourage the fullest possible resumption of normal civilian activity in the buffer zone. To this end, it facilitates the resumption of farming in the buffer zone; assists both communities on matters related to the supply of electricity and water across the lines; facilitates normal contacts between Greek and Turkish Cypriots; provides emergency medical services; and delivers mail and Red Cross messages across the lines. UNFICYP discharges certain humanitarian functions for the Greek Cypriots living in the northern part of the island and periodically visits Turkish Cypriots living in the southern part. In addition, UNFICYP delivers supplies to the small Maronite community in the northern part and generally assists them in humanitarian matters. UNFICYP also cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in providing relief assistance.

Financial Aspects

UNFICYP is the only United Nations peace-keeping operation that is not financed from assessed contributions by States Members of the Organization. The costs of the Force are met by the troop-contributing Governments, by the Government of Cyprus and by voluntary contributions received for this purpose by the United Nations. Voluntary contributions, however, consistently fall short of the required funds, leaving the Special Account for UNFICYP with a total deficit of approximately $178 million for the period from the inception of the Force to June of 1991. As a result, the reimbursement of claims from the troop-contributing countries has been made only up to December 1980.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly voiced his profound concern about the worsening financial situation confronting UNFICYP. He suggested that the best way to finance UNFICYP would be for the United Nations share of the costs to be met from assessed contributions. On 14 June 1991, the Security Council, in resolution 698 (1991), concluded that a method of financing of UNFICYP was needed which would put the Force on a sound and secure financial basis. The Council also asked the Secretary-General to hold consultations with Council members, troop-contributing countries and others concerned, so that a decision on the question of cost could be taken by the time of the next extension of UNFICYP's mandate in December 1991.

Prepared by the Communications and Project Management Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations
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